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ABSTRACT

Literature on sexuality and aging and Maslow's hierarchy of needs (which include physiological needs, safety and security needs, belongingness needs, esteem needs, and the need for self-actualization) are used in this paper to identify at each level the needs of the aging individual as they derive from his sexuality in order to provide a conceptual framework for adult educators who deal with the aging. Focus is on the importance of understanding the totality of the sexual needs of the aging individual as the life cycle is fulfilled and aging is accepted. Topics discussed are (1) the definition of sexuality, (2) common stereotypes and social control mechanisms, (3) needs of the older person relating to his sexuality, and (4) implications for the adult educator. (TA)

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SEXUALITY AND AGING

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A paper presented at the Adult Education Bicentennial Congress, New York City, November 20, 1976

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: By looking at some of the literature on sexuality and aging as well as that on Maslow's hierarchy, this author hopes to provide a conceptual framework from which those who deal with aging individuals can more effectively provide them with opportunities to meet the needs which derive from their sexuality.

Explanation: When considering sexuality and aging it is helpful to begin with a broad definition of sexuality; it is an inseparable part of one's identity and one's self-concept with broad physical, emotional, and relational aspects (of which the sexual act itself is but one element). To each comes the need to relate to others in terms of his* sexuality--a touch, a smile, a word or two, a kiss, or an embrace. The older adult, in fact, may have an even greater need to express himself as a sexual being, since some of his former means of satisfying the needs for belonging, esteem, and self-actualization may be gone from his life style (i.e., job, spouse, friends, health, home).

By traditional definition the needs of hunger, thirst, and sex have been included in the lowest level of Maslow's hierarchy, that of the physiological needs. However, this paper progresses through the levels of Maslow's hierarchy, identifying at each level the needs of the aging individual as they derive from his sexuality. (From lowest to highest, the levels of needs of Maslow's hierarchy are as follows: physiological needs, safety and security needs, belongingness needs, esteem needs, and the need for self-actualization.)

Those engaged in adult education, and particularly those who have any responsibilities for programming for older adults, must become more aware of the needs of the aging that relate to their sexuality.

Conclusion: By a review of some of the literature and discussion, it is hoped that the paper will provide a conceptual framework that will assist the adult educator in understanding and meeting the needs of the aging which refer to their sexuality.

* Forms of the pronoun he are used to refer to both males and females.

Purpose

> Aging is the turning of the wheel, the gradual fulfillment of the life cycle in which receiving matures in giving and living makes dying worthwhile. Aging does not have to be hidden or denied, but can be understood, affirmed, and experienced as a process of growth by which the mystery of life is slowly revealed to us. (Nouwen and Gaffney, 1976, p. 14)

Nouwen and Gaffney write that in order to help or to work with or to plan for the elderly we must first come to the full acceptance of our aging selves. If we are hiding from our aging selves we cannot present ourselves fully to the aging person. If we are living with the illusion that we will always be the same, we will not be able to permit the aging person to enter our lives so that we might touch him. They continue:

> It is no secret that many of our suggestions, advice, admonitions, and good words are often offered in order to keep distance rather than to allow closeness. When we are primarily concerned with giving old people something to do, offering them entertainment and distractions, we might avoid the painful realization that most people do not want to be distracted but heard, not entertained but sustained. (Nouwen and Gaffney, 1976, pp.102-3)

In a lighter vein, Eric Pfeiffer paraphrases (1975, p. 20), "Pogo, we have met the aging, and they are us. We are all aging."

Seeing ourselves as aging is not easy. Beauvoir quotes from Leautaud's Journal; in reference to Leautaud's being called a'little old gentleman', Leautaud writes, "Little old man! Old gentlemen? What the devil--am I as blind as all that? I cannot see that I am either a little or old gentleman. I see myself as a fifty-year-old, certainly, but as an exceedingly well preserved fifty year old." Later, when sixty, he flew into a rage when a young man offered him his seat on the underground railway, and he wrote, "Oh! Be damned to old age, that hideous thing!"

At sixty-nine, he wrote, "It is only my sight that is failing. I am exactly as I was at twenty. My memory is as good as ever and my mind as quick and sharp." And at seventy, when a young woman lost her balance on the railway and said, 'I'm so sorry, Grandpa, I nearly fell on you,' he wrote, "Damn it all! My age must show clearly in my face. How impossible to see oneself as one really is! (Beauvoir, 1972, pp.340-1)

By looking at some of the literature on sexuality and aging as well as that on Maslow's hierarchy, this author hopes to provide in this paper a conceptual framework from which those who deal with aging individuals can more effectively provide them with opportunities to meet the needs which derive from their sexuality. Most studies on sexuality and aging have concentrated on the physical aspect of sexual intercourse, whether one can or can't, whether one does or doesn't. Such studies are important and have helped us to understand that involvement in the sex act itself is not only a possibility but frequently a reality for individuals far beyond the age of sixty or seventy. However, these studies have characteristically not dealt with other aspects of sexuality, such as the need for affection, tenderness, love, touch, and relating to another individual. This paper, on the other hand, attempts to bring into focus the importance of understanding the totality of the sexual needs of the aging individual, of each one of us as we come to the fulfillment of our life cycles and to the full acceptance of our aging selves.

First we will consider the definition of sexuality, secondly, the stereotypes and social controls active in our society, thirdly, the needs of the older person relating to his sexuality, and finally, implications for the adult educator. (By traditional definition the needs of hunger, thirst, and sex have been included in the lowest level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs; however, this paper progresses through the levels of Maslow's hierarchy, identifying at each level the needs of the aging individual as they derive from his sexuality.)

In concluding this introductory statement of purpose, the words of Kalish are appropriate, when he writes that in addition to learning about older people and the meaning of aging, . . . another kind of awareness is inevitable. Each of you will probably wonder about yourself as you grow older: Does this sentence apply to me? Will I suffer this loss, have this capacity reduced, become more of this or less of that? If so, will I cope successfully, or will I become lonely, depressed, unhappy? Speaking only for myself, I firmly believe that my own involvement in the field of aging has offered me more options as I get older, has helped me to understand some of the changes I see in myself as being anticipated and normal, and has permitted me greater perspective and even a touch of humor about getting old. (1975, p.viii)

Sexuality Defined

An understanding of sexuality in its broadest kind of definition is essential. Sexuality is an inseparable part of one's identity and one's self concept with broad physical, emotional, relational aspects (of which the sex act itself is but one element). To each of us comes the need to relate to others in terms of his* sexuality -- a touch, a smile, a word or two, a kiss, or an embrace. The older adult, in fact, may have an even greater need to express himself as a sexual being, since some of his former means of satisfying the needs for belonging, esteem, and self-actualization may be gone from his life style (i.e., job, spouse, friends, health, home, etc.).

Hettlinger (1975, pp. 115-6), Shope (1975, p. 36-7), and Burnside (1975, p. 26), as well as other contemporary writers, describe one's sexuality as being an inseparable part of one's personality and one's human interrelationships.

* Forms of the pronoun he are used to refer to both males and females.

Shope describes human sexuality as being more than sexual behavior, feelings, attitudes, and beliefs. He writes that sexuality " . . . encompasses the whole person, including his or her personality, general emotional tone, intellect, physical makeup, and spiritual functioning." (1975, p. 36) Burnside points out that sexuality is part of one's self concept, body image, and self esteem. She uses the word broadly to include " . . . flirting, dating behavior, touching, man/man relationships, woman/woman relationships, and woman/man relationships." (1975, p. 26)

Weg (1975, p. 7), Long (1976, p. 242), Rubin (1965, pp. 231-2), Beauvoir (1972, p. 318), and Genevay (1975, p. 70) all deal with definitions of sexuality especially as it relates to the aging individual. Weg writes:

> Being a sexual human being begins in utero; it's very much a part of being human. Yet we put sexuality in a very separate category and treat it very separately. While it is true we change with time physiologically and there is a slowing down, a decrement in function, it is also true there is much left to work with when the magic wand says 'you are sixty-five'. The changes are not dramatic from sixty, even from fifty. Physiological changes are rather gradual and the body accommodates well to these small changes. The potential that sexual expression can continue to the day we die---to eighty, ninety or a hundred is very great. (1975, p.7)

Long emphasizes that sexuality is much more than intercourse, and that other kinds of sexual expression such a teasing, smiling, twinkling eyes provide an emotional lift and " . . . add zest to life at a time when it is greatly needed. . ." (1976, p. 242)

Rubin writes:

> The fullest expression of the sexual needs and interests of men and women over sixty cannot take place in a society which denies or ignores the reality of these needs and interests; or in an atmosphere which prevents full and open inquiry into them.

> Sexuality after sixty is not an invention of those who are studying it and discovering its extent and its variety of manifestations. It exists in one form or another---overt or repressed, healthy or distorted ---in all individuals who have been studied. Its existence has been noted in married and unmarried persons, in all social classes and groups, in those maintaining their own private homes and lives and in those confined to geriatric homes and hospitals. This sexuality does not necessarily express itself in the ability to have sexual intercourse; for many it expresses itself only in the need for continued closeness, affection, and intimacy, in a continued cultural and intellectual interest in eroticism, or in the need for some romance in life. (1965, pp. 231-2)

Beauvoir expresses the same thoughts when she says that when a person's genital functions diminish or even become non-existent, that person does not become sexless. She writes that dealing with the sexuality of the aging includes looking at man's relationship with himself, with others, and with the outside world. (1972, p. 318)

Common Stereotypes and Social Control Mechanisms

Most of us are familiar with the typical stereotypes of the aging and sexuality. The description of the cartoon depicting an older couple in traditional wedding garb, with the white-haired groom carrying the bride up the stairs has the comment underneath, "No, Maude, you're not too heavy, but for the life of me, I can't remember why we're going upstairs." Keeping one's perspective and sense of humor is indeed necessary, but the old person does not have to be the subject of cruel jokes. Perhaps more realistic is the picture of the 84 year old groom and his 89 year old bride that appeared in a newspaper recently, Their biggest enjoyment is drinking beer and watching TV together while lying in their new double bed in the nursing home where they met.

Phieffer classifies the stereotypes into three categories as follows:

> Many people believe that sexual desire and sexual activity cease to exist with the onset of old age; or that sexual desire and sexual activity should cease to exist with the onset of old age; or that aged persons who say they are still sexually active are either morally perverse or engaged in wish-fulfilling deceptions and self-deceptions. (1969, pp. 153-4)

He continues by saying that these stereotypes have little relationship to actual data available.

Petras writes that American society has tended to define the aging person as being more or less non-sexual. It is presumed, therefore, that older people marry for companionship rather than for "sex", and that older people are content with such "unisex" roles as the baby-sitting grandparent. (1973, p. 65)

Some of these stereotypes regarding sexuality and aging have resulted from the social control mechanisms that have been at work in our society. Klausner writes that society attempts, by both informal and formal social controls, to regulate the selection of role partners, the kinds of sexual behaviors engaged in, as well as the occasions for sexual involvement. "Attitudinal disapproval of individuals' erotic behaviors, which is perhaps the commonest form of control, may be expressed as verbal chastisement, gossip, scandal, humor, or mockery." (Klausner, 1968, p. 204)

Weinberg writes that the healthy, competent individual will frequently rise above or mold his environment to suit his own needs. In other words, the social controls described above might well be ignored. However, a reduction in an individual's competence increases his behavioral dependence on his environment, on the external conditions, and on the social organization. He continues:

> In old age a person's competence--physical, mental, social---is reduced, and he thus becomes dependent on the environment. To attain the fit with his environment he engages in a continuous process of behavior change. This does not mean that he never tries to or actually alters the circumstances about him. It simply means that environmental change takes place infrequently and to a lesser degree than the frequency and degree that behavior is changed to suit the environment. (Weinberg, 1969, p. 159)

Weinberg also writes that the aged in our society have three characteristics: they are invisible, they are untouchable, and they have unsatisfied needs for contactual relationships. He writes that they are invisible as a group---they are for the most part silent; they are not homogeneous, so they have no "single voice"; they are also invisible in that they have lost their external erotic values. The old are not "attractively packaged," and they have lost their visible appeal. (This observation came to light to this writer during a three weeks graduate seminar on education and aging when during a discussion it appeared to be the consensus of the group that ----- physical attractiveness and old age were mutually exclusive terms. The fact remains, however, that we are the ones who perpetuate this myth of mutual exclusivity.) Weinberg also writes about the untouchability of the aging person; very few people seek physical contact with the aging person. He writes, "We are all too ready to touch and even caress and pat the young and the cat or the dog, but not the aged. Our physical encounters with them are perfunctory, with no warmth or conviction behind them." (Weinberg, pp. 160-1)

Pfeiffer (1969, pp. 152-3), Comfort (1976, p. 167), and Felstein (1970, p.23), also discuss the taboos against sex in old age that have been prevalent in our society and have tended to exert control over the actions of the aging. Attitudes and beliefs that deal with sex as primarily or only procreative (and not recreative), attitudes carried over from the Victorian era, beliefs that romantic love can occur only among the young, that only the young can be physically attracted to one another, beliefs that sex and sexuality are terms relating only or primarily to the physical act of intercourse---these have all contributed to the social controls against sexuality in the aging. Comfort writes (1976, p. 167) that in our "sexually handicapped society" this handicap has been, until recently, a self-propagating type of social control. "Older people were not surveyed about their sexual activity because everyone knew that they had none, and they were assumed to have none, because nobody asked. For some people, the fantasy of the asexual senior, which they had when they were younger, became a blueprint for their own aging, a classical case of bewitchment by expectation."

Beauvoir writes of the social control with regard to sexuality imposed upon the aging in her eloquent style:

> Another obstacle (to sexual activity in old age) is the pressure of public opinion. The elderly person conforms to the conventional ideal that is offered for his acceptance. He is afraid of scandal or quite simply of ridicule. He becomes the slave of what people might say. He inwardly accepts the watchwords of propriety and continence imposed by the community. He is ashamed of his own desires, and he denies having them; he refuses to be a lecherous old man in his own eyes, or a shameless old woman. He fights against his sexual drives to the point of thrusting them back into his unconscious mind.
>
> As we might on the face of it suppose, seeing that there is so great a difference between them in their biological destiny and their social status, the case of men is quite unlike that of women. Biologically men are at the greater disadvantage; socially, it is the women who are worse off, because of their condition as erotic objects.
>
> In neither case is their behavior thoroughly understood. A certain number of inquiries into it have been carried out, and these have provided the basis for something in the way of statistics. The replies obtained are always of dubious value; and in this field the notion of an average has little meaning. (1972, pp. 320-1)

Needs, Sexuality, and Aging

Maslow writes that needs are gaps between a present condition and a desired (or prescribed) condition; needs may be physiological, psychological, or social. Needs are motivators of behavior. Whenever one need is satiated, another need arises to motivate man's actions. Maslow writes (1970, p. 24), "Man is a wanting animal and rarely reaches a state of complete satisfaction except for a short time." Frequently these needs are referred to as basic needs, and Maslow's definition of "basic" as "characteristic of the whole human species" (1951, p. 257) is important here.

Maslow contends that man's needs can be ranked in a hierarchy, that there is a specific sequence or development of needs. Furthermore, he says that once lower level needs are satisfied, they are no longer motivators of behavior; however, when the lower level needs are satisfied, new and higher needs emerge. The needs at the lowest level of the hierarchy are the physiological needs, such as hunger, thirst, and sex; and the next level of needs is described by Maslow as safety needs, such as security, protection, and freedom from fear. At the third level one finds the belongingness and love needs emerging when both of the lower level needs are fairly well gratified. At the fourth level one finds the esteem needs. Maslow writes that all people (with the exception of a few pathological cases) have a need for self-respect and for the esteem of other people. He classifies this need in two sets, that of the desire for achievement, confidence, and independence, and that of the desire for reputation, prestige, and recognition. Maslow writes (1970, p. 45):

> Satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability, and adequacy, of being useful and necessary in the world. But thwarting of these needs produces feelings of inferiority, of weakness, of helplessness.

The fifth, or highest level need, is the need for self-actualization, the desire for fulfillment. Maslow writes (1970, p. 46): "This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one idiosyncratically is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming." He also writes (1971, p. 50):

> . . . we see that self-actualization is not a matter of one great moment. It is not true that on Thursday at four o'clock the trumpet blows and one steps into the pantheon forever and altogether. Self-actualization is a matter of degree, or little accessions accumulated one by one.

Maslow writes that at the level of self-actualization needs, individual differences are the greatest; the emergence of the need for self-actualization usually depends upon at least partial fulfillment of the physiological, safety, love, and esteem needs. Maslow points out, however, that lower level needs need not be 100 percent satisfied before a higher level need emerges as a motivator of behavior. He also indicates that the emergence of a higher need level is a gradual and not a sudden event (Maslow, 1970, pp. 53-54).

Some people have interpreted the Maslow hierarchy of needs in the shape of a pyramid. However, perhaps a more true representation of the Maslow hierarchy of needs is seen in the diagram of Krech et al. (1974, p. 462) in which the need levels are pictured as overlapping waves.

There are a number of people who argue that because of the difficulty of operationalizing the Maslovian hierarchy of needs as well as for other reasons it is not a valid theory and that furthermore it is a "myth" that perpetuates the inequalities of society. Strauss writes, for example (1974, pp. 79-80):

> The Maslow scheme is highly flattering to professors and managers, two occupations which place great value on self-actualization. Nevertheless, in its over-simplified form, it can be criticized on a number of grounds. For example, the scheme is stated in a non-operational manner which makes it very difficult to prove or disprove (especially since most forms of human behavior

satisfy more than one need). Further, there may be substantial differences among people in the relative weight they give to the 'basic' (physical, safety, and social) needs as against the 'higher' level ones, such as esteem and self-actualization.

Another interesting criticism of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and his writings in general comes from Kasten (1972, p. 29), who claims that Maslow's writings are sexist, that he makes "a hodgepodge of inconsistent and ambivalent statements about women and sex roles. . . " However, it seems overwhelmingly clear to this researcher that whereas Maslow may have struggled with some traditional sex role stereotypes and expectations, that when he speaks of basic human needs he is indeed speaking of all persons, male and female.

Maslow writes that a person's capacities, or aptitudes, clamor to be used; in other words, a person's capacities are also needs.

He says:

> Not only is it fun to use our capacities, but it is also necessary for growth. The unused skill or organ can become a disease center or else atrophy or disappear, thus diminishing the person. (1968, p. 201)

Haney (1967, pp. 135-7), describes the Pike in the Tank experiment, in which a twelve-foot tank was divided into two segments by a glass partition. A Northern Pike was placed in one compartment and a bucket of minnows was poured into the other compartment. The pike rushed for the minnows and of course bumped his nose. After more than 150 bumps on the nose, the pike stopped trying. Subsequently, when the glass partition was removed and the minnows swam around the pike, he did not eat any. In most instances when this experiment was performed, the pike would starve to death. We, as humans, can go through this same process; by generalizing painful, failing, or humiliating experiences, we may deny our needs, or stop trying altogether. (Humans also can learn vicariously, and may not have to go through the experience as the pike themselves.) Thus, the aging individual may have to go

through a period of relearning---or recognizing not only that he does have certain needs but also that he has the potential for satisfying them.

Two cautions must be offered as we discuss needs and the aging individual: first, that human needs are not "turned off" as we reach the later stages of life, so that it is appropriate for us to discuss human needs and aging as related to sexuality; secondly, that the desire for and intensity of need satisfaction will vary greatly from individual to individual. The aging population has the same set of characteristics as other general groups of people---witty, slow, dominating, passive, timid, brave, enthusiastic, apathetic, etc. Similarly, the need for sexual expression will range from negligible to intense, from a desire and ability for interpersonal relationships involving conversation, touch, and acceptance to a desire and ability for relating by means of sexual intercourse.

Calderone describes the sexual needs of older people as:

> . . . the same kinds as those of younger people with equivalent variations in intensity, kinds of expression, and other persons to express with. As human beings at any stage in life, we long for other human beings to respond to us and to be responsive with, whether in touch, in shared pleasures, joys, sorrows, intellectual interchange, or from time to time in sexual responsiveness at many levels including the purely physical. If we are very fortunate, when we are old we will still have one long-term relationship in which we really 'know' one another in the fullest biblical sense, but one or more relationships of less than that all too rare total kind of intimacy, would still place us in the class of the highly favored. (Calderone in Burnside, 1975, p. 33)

As has been pointed out, the need for sex has usually been identified as belonging on the lowest level of Maslow's hierarchy, that is the level of physiological needs. Whereas the satisfaction of the physical element of sexuality is not the primary emphasis of this paper, it must be considered herein. Masters and Johnson (1968), Comfort (1976), Pfieffer (1969), and Newman and Nichols (1974) have published studies with conclusions regarding the physical capacities and physical needs of the aging individual. These reports are easily available and provide important information to the professional working with the older person. To simplify part of the conclusions of these studies, one can say that although there is a slowing down in some of the physiological processes, sexual activity in the reasonably healthy individual can be expected to continue into the sixties, seventies, eighties, and nineties, given the accessibility of an "interesting and interested" partner. Older women have been shown to be less sexually active than older men, but speculation is that reasons for this lesser activity are societal rather than physical, for the older woman is less likely to have a "socially acceptable" partner than the older male. Kalish (1974, p. 130) predicts that by the year 2000 it will be commonplace for men and women in their sixties and seventies to be ". . . sexually attractive and sexually attracted, and sexually capable."

At the next level of Maslow's hierarchy, one finds the needs for safety and security. Bundza writes:

> Security means much more than having access to the basic necessities of life. In a broad sense, security means the feeling that the environment and the people in it meet one's needs, both physical and emotional, and will continue to do so. It is the condition of being 'safe', free from the danger of losing highly valued possessions. It is closely related to trust; without it an individual cannot grow, relax, or experience even a moment's worth of happiness. (1976, p. 17)

One cannot help but realize the significance of this interpretation of security when he reads a recent release of accounts of the elderly in Great Britain and in Scandinavia, two countries in which the "creature comforts" of the aged and the retired are generally well provided for. Jensen writes: "By most standards the package (in Great Britain) works. By comparison with many nations, Britain's treatment of its elderly is considerate and comprehensive, extensive and successful." (1976, p. 8) Mortensen writes that in Scandinavia, "Tickets to films, theater, sporting events and outings as well as public transport are sold to pensioners at greatly reduced prices. In Norway, all burials are paid for with funds from the People's pension system." The need for security and safety well satisfied, you may be thinking? Yet in both countries there are people like Mrs. Richards, now 95, who has not left her apartment in five years, who says: "'It is the loneliness. When you look around and there's no one there. You don't know what it is to be alone, no one to come in. No one. I sit here and listen to every step, but no one ever comes to my stairs.'" (Mortensen and Jensen, 1976, pp. 1 and 8)

Security then involves more than the knowledge that we can satisfy our "creature comforts," but extends to the knowledge that we can find in our environment the people and relationships necessary to satisfy our other needs as well. Security means the awareness that we can continue to function as a sexual being, at whatever age we might be. Security in our physical and societal environment provide the essential underpinning for the satisfaction of higher level needs related to one's sexuality.

At the third level of Maslow's hierarchy one finds the need for love and belongingness. During youth and the middle years one's work, one's family, and one's circle of friends and associates generally satisfy the need for love and belonging. Membership in clubs, attendance at civic, fraternal, and social meetings, being part of the eight-to-five work force, coming home to spouse and frequently also children, informal get-togethers with family, friends, or neighbors, conversations with the clerk or stranger next to us at the store generally are taken for granted by those of us to whom these things are an everyday occurrence.

Bundza writes, "Relationship validates and confirms our very existence....The absence of relationship is loneliness, perhaps the most bitter of all human experiences." (1976, p. 18)

Calderone quotes from Samuel Ogden as he discusses his will to live after the death of his spouse, when he suddenly felt alone, without the resources to satisfy his need for love and belonging:

> At noon on one of the happiest Christmas days in which our whole family took part, my beloved wife died suddenly and painlessly in our midst, and from that moment on life had no more meaning for me. After 51 years of marriage as nearly ideal as one could humanly be, I was left alone. Not literally alone, for there were other dearly loved ones, members of the family which surrounded me (there were more than a dozen of us), but in the tragic depths of my misery I could see naught but my own loss, and how great that was no one will ever know. Our love was not simply a compatibility of mind and spirit, but it was intensely physical as well. For 51 years, since our wedding night, we slept naked together in the same bed and we enjoyed all the passions and excitements that two powerfully sexed persons induce in each other. So it was that now we two devoted lovers were parted at a time when the joys of our love were sweeter than they had ever been before, and I, at the age of 76, was plunged into a blackness of despair which I cannot possibly describe. (Calderone, 1975, p. 291)

Long (1976), Burnside (1975), Genevay (1975), Calderone (1975a, 1975b) all discuss the need for love and belonging as part of one's sexuality, a need that does not diminish as one ages. Losses of family, spouse, friends, job, home, etc. may very well increase the desire for need gratification related to one's sexuality.

Genevay also reports that in describing the responses of five panelists, ages 68 to 87, companionship and compassion were crucial elements of sexuality, that they all voiced the feeling of being "starved for affection." (1975, p. 70)

At the fourth level of Maslow's hierarchy one finds the esteem needs, which include the need for self-respect and for the esteem of other people. If the aging person's circle of associates, friends, and family has diminished, where will he find the satisfaction of his needs for esteem? Burnside writes: "Do we withhold affection, tenderness, and touch (from the elderly person) because we are afraid to get involved, are repulsed by the idea, or simply are insensitive?" (1975, p. 49)

This writer suggests that the need for touch as a part of our expression of our sexuality is an integral part of the need for esteem. In touching and in being touched we affirm our existence and find justification for our existence. Shope points out that the need for tactile stimulation continues throughout the life span. (1975, pp. 44-5) Touch may vary from a simple pat on the back or arm to a passionate embrace. Genevay writes:

> If we are sexual beings to the end of our lives, then where are we to take this very precious and uniquely personal gift? Who will be the receivers of our affection, companionship, our touching and baring of our innermost selves, our sharing of those parts of ourselves which happen to be genital, and our remembrances of our own sexual history? Who will hear you, touch you, and be pleased that you touch them----with words or hands, when you are seventy, seventy-five, or eighty-five? (1975, p. 70)

Without the opportunity to touch and be touched we lose a vital source of the gratification of the esteem need.

At the fifth, or highest level of need, is the need for self-actualization, the desire for self-fulfillment, the desire ". . . to become everything that one is capable of becoming." Florida Scott-Maxwell, writing in her Journal when she was in her eighties, says:

> I must ask myself, 'What have I to become immortal?. . . .
> We have to believe we have value, we could not have courage otherwise, and our sense of being more than ourselves is our most precious possession. (Scott-Maxwell, p. 40)

The need for self-actualization, like other human needs, does not diminish with age. Manney (1975, p. 45) writes that many old people regret the loss of opportunities for sexual expression, ". . . for an active and satisfying sexual life has much to do with the way an individual views himself as a man or woman, how he views his body, and his capacity to engage in intimate relationships with other people." When we fail to satisfy our sexual needs, we also fail to satisfy some of the self-actualization needs related to our identity. Shope writes:

> Set apart from the rest of living, sexual relationships often lose their essence, but when woven into the fabric of life, they help to slow down the process of depersonalization---the process whereby one feels less and less like a person and more and more like an object. (1975, p. 37)

Our sexuality is a part of us that cannot be separated out from the rest of us; as we age our sexual needs may range from the passionate expression of physical intercourse to the smile, glance, or touch from a friend or stranger. Whatever those needs may be, it is likely that they will range through the levels of the Maslovian hierarchy. The aging person may seek satisfaction of his physical need for sexual expression; he may seek satisfaction of the need for security, to know that his physical and social environment will provide opportunities for need gratification; he may seek satisfaction of the need for love and belonging, knowing that there are others with whom he can interact and who accept him, at whatever level of intimacy is desired by the persons involved; he may seek satisfaction of the need for esteem, for achievement and recognition, often manifested in something so simple and taken for granted as a touch; and finally, he may continue to "become all that he can be" until his last days, reaffirming his sexuality and his personhood through his relationships with others.

CONCLUSION

Pfeiffer writes that those who deal with the aging--physicians, social workers, and others--- must become both aware and accepting of the reality that many aging people to "continue to have or desire to have as active sex life." (1969, p. 160) Additionally, adult educators, physicians, and others must understand that even if an active sex life (in terms of intercourse) may not be continued or desired, other sexual needs remain to be satisfied.

In concluding, a number of questions are proposed to guide us as we continue to strive to provide opportunities for the satisfaction of the sexual needs of the aging person.

1. Do we accept our own aging selves (and subsequently reject the traditional negative interpretations of aging)?
2. Are we coming to an understanding of sexuality as a part of personhood, i.e., sexuality in its broadest context?
3. Are we comfortable with our own sexuality?
4. Are we attempting to free ourselves of the stereotypic thinking with regard to sexuality and the aging individual?
5. Are we alert and objective enough to recognize when social control mechanisms may be operating counter to the best interests of the older person?
6. Can we accept alternative life styles, homosexuality, and masturbation as being appropriate expressions of sexuality for the aging person, whatever his choice may be?
7. Is our process of scientific inquiry sensitive to the attitudes as well as the needs of the aging person?
8. Are we providing, through ourselves or others, adequate counseling for older people seeking advice regarding their sexuality?

9. Are we sensitive to the need for privacy in living arrangements, whether these be communal, institutional, or at home?

10. Are we free of the indifference manifested in expressions such as 'What do you expect at your age?'?

11. Are we providing sufficient sex education opportunities for older people?

12. Are we encouraging socialization between the sexes (e.g., coffees, teas, cocktails, dancing, cards, etc.) whenever possible and appropriate?

13. Do we support the aging person and avoid making fun of ideas, attitudes, and behaviors different from our own? Additionally, do we allow him to make his own choices?

14. Do we have the courage to speak out when the media continue to perpetuate the stereotypes of the 'dirty old man' and 'asexual old bag female', etc.?

15. Do we listen to the aging people for whom we are planning, or do we fall into the trap of role reversal, providing them with what we think they 'need to know'? (An older woman commented last summer, "I'm tired of going to programs on safety, how to stretch my budget, and how to prepare nutritious meals!")

16. Do we encourage the provision of opportunities for physical contact, such as Foster Grandparents, etc.? Weinberg advises:
The hours that many of these (retarded) children are able to spend on the laps of elderly aides, held and cuddled by them, seem to serve a dual purpose of providing comfort and contact to both, security to the young and a sense of worthwhileness and an unrecognized gratification for tactile need in the old. (1969, p. 161)

17. In our needs assessment and program planning do we address squarely and without embarrassment the sexual needs of the aging person?

18. And finally, to repeat and re-emphasize, do we recognize that for many older people an active sex life is both desired and possible, but where this is not continued or desired, other sexual needs remain?

"Becoming all that one can be" involves full acceptance of our sexuality as well as allowing ourselves and others maximum opportunities to satisfy sexual needs. Adult educators have both the responsibility and the challenge to become involved in helping the aging individual come to full awareness and acceptance of his sexuality.

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